

# Introduction to Cultural Studies

BA Program *Culture, Politics and Society* | 1<sup>st</sup> year | 3 credits – 6 ECTS

Fall term AY 2023-24 | Tuesdays 11:50-12:50 + 13:50-14:50, Thursdays 11:50-12:50

[The course includes an EXCURSION to the WELTMUSEUM VIENNA (Nov. 21). Please note that the time of the respective class may differ from the regular schedule!]

Instructor: Ulrich Meurer

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The instructor is available for individual questions after every class.

You can also register for additional OFFICE HOUR slots via email.

Teaching Assistant: Rebeca Marques Rocha

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You have access to all readings, web-resources and videos via MOODLE:

<https://ceulearning.ceu.edu/login/index.php>

Link for selecting a topic/date for your in-class IMPULSE (register until Sept. 22, 2023 / see below: 'assignments'):

<https://nuudel.digitalcourage.de/ZdCEkrkTT2KwyI1r>

Link for participation via ZOOM (only from other countries and due to visa/immigration issues):

<https://ceu-edu.zoom.us/j/97052332348?pwd=VTZmUjcwWE8ycjF3OW5uNzh6MWhiZz09>

Meeting-ID: 970 5233 2348 / Password: 670202

## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“Culture” – claims its master theoretician Terry Eagleton – is “the second or third most complex word in the English language.” Does it denote good table manners or national heritage; is it a mark of distinction or a set of everyday practices; is it the same as “Civilization” or the opposite of “Nature”? What is more, the term’s complexity seems to entail a rich bouquet of study methods: Can one read a culture like a text? Can one analyze it like the psyche of an individual? Can one criticize it like an ideology? Or does one always need a new and different approach – for hegemonic Western culture, pop cultures, subcultures, queer cultures, postcolonial cultures?

Accordingly, Cultural Studies draws on numerous academic fields (including sociology, political sciences, history, anthropology, philosophy, literary and media studies) and also integrates a variety of works and theories that precede the so-called “cultural turn” and official establishment of the discipline.



In light of such diversity, this introductory course wants to find the (ideal) balance between overview and detail. On the one hand, we will discuss groundbreaking texts from the pre-war period to the present to get to know many of the canonical concepts of Cultural Studies as well as its only just emerging ideas – not by adhering to the habitual theoretical categories (“Marxism”, “Structuralism”, “Postmodernism” ...) but by exploring areas of interest such as signs and bodies, space and race. On the other hand, we will try and test cultural theories on all kinds of material, from music videos or motel rooms to Vienna’s famous Sacher cake.

LEARNING OUTCOMES :

Students will be introduced to ► seminal concepts/models in Cultural Studies. They will get insight into ► ongoing debates between established and contemporary perspectives of the discipline. They will ► review cultural theories in the light of various artifacts, source material and audiovisual works (video, installation, film, virtual environment). Participants will learn how to ► structure, formulate, and evaluate scholarly arguments through in-class discussions, short presentations, and written papers. They will have the opportunity to ► apply their knowledge in the form of audio/visual course work.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE + READINGS :

- **Mandatory readings and audiovisual resources (printed in black) are prepared prior to the respective class.**
- ▷ Optional readings & material (indicated by grey font) serve as additional basis for presentations, further explorations of the topic and inspiration for your final course works ...
- **Classes taught by the Teaching Assistant are marked with 'TA' in the left column.**

Intro: What We Study When We Study Culture	
Sept.19 + Sept. 21	<p>What are Cultural Studies? Discussion of the Course Topic + Organization and Assignments</p>  <p>▷ David Oswell: "Introduction: From the Beginning", in: <i>Culture and Society. An Introduction to Cultural Studies</i>. London: Sage 2006, 1-12 (especially pp. 1-10) ▷ Raymond Williams: <i>Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society</i>. Oxford: Oxford UP 2015.</p>
Sept.26 2 cl.	<p>What is "Culture"? What is "Civilization"?</p> <p>► <b>Matthew Arnold: "Culture and Anarchy," in: <i>Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader</i>, 6-11.</b></p>  <p>► <b>Stephen Greenblatt: "Culture", in: Frank Lentricchia, Thomas McLaughlin (eds): <i>Critical Terms for Literary Studies</i>. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press 1995, 225-232.</b> ► <b>Philip Smith: "Introduction: What is Culture? What is Cultural Theory?", in: <i>Cultural Theory: An Introduction</i>, Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2001, 1-5.</b></p> <p>▷ T. S. Eliot: <i>Notes Towards the Definition of Culture</i>. London: Faber &amp; Faber 1948, 21-34. ▷ Terry Eagleton: "Culture and Civilization", in: <i>Culture</i>. New Haven, London: Yale UP 2016, 1-29.</p>

## I. Culture as Sign System

Sept. 28  
1 cl.

Reading/Decoding



► Clifford Geertz: "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in: *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books 1973, 3-30.

▷ Ziauddin Sardar, Borin Van Loon: *Introducing Cultural Studies*. New York: Totem 1997, 3-23.

▷ Stuart Hall: "Encoding/Decoding", in: Simon During (ed.): *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1999, 507-517.

▷ David Oswell: "Semiosis: From Representation to Translation", in: *Culture and Society. An Introduction to Cultural Studies*. London: Sage 2006, 13-40.

Oct. 03  
+  
Oct. 05  
TA

Mythologies

► Roland Barthes: "Saponids and Detergents" (pp. 32-34), "Steak-Frites" (83-85), "Einstein's Brain" (100-102), "The Man in the Street on Strike" (149-152), in: *Mythologies*. New York: Hill & Wang 2013.

▷ if you like: "Toys" (59-61), "Racine Is Racine" (106-108), "Striptease" (165-168), "Plastic" (193-195).

► Roland Barthes: "Myth Today": abridged version on MOODLE (16 pp. / from the original chapter in *Mythologies*, 217-274).



► Philip Smith: "Roland Barthes", in: *Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2001, 107-114.

▷ Winfried Nöth: "Saussure", in: *Handbook of Semiotics*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana UP 1995, 56-63.

▷ Pete Bennett, Julian McDougall (eds): *Barthes' Mythologies Today: Readings of Contemporary Culture*. New York, London: Routledge 2013, 143-168 [+ miscellaneous articles from the book].

Oct. 10  
+  
Oct. 12  
TA

Simulacra

► Jean Baudrillard: "The Precession of Simulacra", in: Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner (eds): *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2006, 453-463 / 466-471.

► *Serious Games* (Video installation / Harun Farocki, 2009-10):

<https://vimeo.com/370494311>



▷ John Storey: "Jean Baudrillard", in: *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. Harlow: Pearson Longman 2009, 186-191.

▷ Anders Engberg-Pedersen: "Technologies of Experience: Harun Farocki's *Serious Games* and Military Aesthetics", in: *boundary 2*/44:4 (November 2017), 155-178.

## II. Mass Culture and Marxist Critique

Oct.17  
+

Oct.19  
TA

### Industrial Reproducibility

▶ Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility", in: *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard UP 2008, 19-55 (especially pp. 19-42).

▶ Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer: "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", in: Simon During (ed.): *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1999, 31-41.



▷ *Стачка* (Strike / Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) [0:00-18:00 / 1:17:37-1:28:19]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwQm7R1ZHns&t=287s>

▷ *Olympia* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1938) [0:00-18:00]:

<https://www.docsonline.tv/olympia/>

▷ Rachele Dini: *An Analysis of Walter Benjamin's The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London, New York: Routledge 2017, 9-13; 34-43.

▷ Angela McRobbie: "The Place of Walter Benjamin in Cultural Studies", in: Simon During (ed.): *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1999, 77-96.

▷ John Storey: "The Frankfurt School", in: *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. Harlow: Pearson Longman 2009, 62-70.

▷ *They Live* (John Carpenter, 1988) [Theatrical trailer, full movie is accessible on MOODLE]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLrafyWhzG4&t=79s>

Oct.24  
2 cl.

TA

### Late Capitalism

▶ Fredric Jameson: "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", in: Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner (eds): *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2006, 482-489 / 492-494 (incl. "Historicism Effaces History") / 505-519.



▷ Philip Smith: "Fredric Jameson", in: *Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2001, 222-224.

▷ Andrew Milner: "Postmodernism and Late Capitalism", in: *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press 1994, 135-138.

## IV. Cultural Spaces

Oct.31  
+

Nov.02

### Other Spaces and Non-Places

▶ Michel Foucault: "Of Other Spaces", in: *Diacritics* 16/1 (Spring 1986), 22-27.

▶ Marc Augé: *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London, New York: Verso 2008: excerpts on MOODLE (13 pp.).

▶ *Heterotopia I* (Peter Halley, video by Marià Inès Arrillaga, 2019):

<https://youtu.be/rDrbzx9I2MI>

▶ Peter Halley: "Heterotopia I", press release by the *Academy of Fine Arts of Venice & Flash Art* (2019):

[https://www.accademiavenezia.it/upload/eventi/file/PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_PETER\\_HALLEY\\_HETEROTOPIA\\_3004.pdf](https://www.accademiavenezia.it/upload/eventi/file/PRESS_RELEASE_PETER_HALLEY_HETEROTOPIA_3004.pdf)



- ▷ Michel Foucault: "Space, Power and Knowledge", in: Simon During (ed.): *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1999, 134-141.
- ▷ Michael Ryan: "Place, Space, and Geography", in: *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2010, 12-25.

### III. Cultures of Gender and the Body

Nov.07

TA

+

Nov.09

TA

#### Performing Gender

- ▶ Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble*. London, New York: Routledge 1999, 3-22 / 174-180.



- ▶ *Every Party Matters* (Isabelle Karabajakian & Rebeca Marques Rocha, 2020): <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/714060695> [password: OMOH2020]

- ▷ Simon During: "Feminism's Aftermath: Gender Today" & "Queer Culture", in: *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge 2005, 171-189.
- ▷ Judith Butler: *Undoing Gender*. New York, London: Routledge 2004, 1-16 / 40-56.

Nov.14

+

Nov.16

TA

#### The Fe/Male Gaze

- ▶ Laura Mulvey: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in: Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner (eds): *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2006, 342-352.
- ▶ *Sissy Fatigue* (Olivia Norris, Oscar Oldershaw, Jackie Pratt, Joseph Campbell, Gonnerheous Reese, 2019): <https://www.nowness.com/picks/sissy-fatigue>



- ▶ Emily Manning: "The Female Gaze: How Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin Portray Men", *i-D Magazine*, 23.06.2016: <https://i-d.vice.com/en/article/bjqz4a/the-female-gaze-women-look-at-men>

- ▷ Claire Sisco King: "The Male Gaze in Visual Culture", in: Marnel Niles Goins, Joan Faber McAlister, Bryant Keith Alexander (eds): *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication*. London, New York: Routledge 2021, 120-132.
- ▷ Lauren Rohrs: "The Homosexual Male Gaze: Normalizing Homosexuality through the Use of Heteronormative Narrative Techniques in Film", in: *Cinej Cinema Journal* 7/2 (2019), 6-22.
- ▷ Michael Ryan: "Gender and Sexuality", in: *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2010, 26-39.

## V. Cultures of Race and Post/Colonialism

Nov. 21  
+  
Nov. 23  
TA

### Orientalism

Nov. 21: Visit to the WELTMUSEUM VIENNA, Heldenplatz, 1010 Vienna:  
<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/>

► Edward W. Said: *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage 1979: excerpts on MOODLE (30 pp.).



▷ Riley Quinn: *An Analysis of Edward Said's Orientalism*. London, New York: Routledge 2017, 9-12 / 35-44.

▷ John Storey: "'Race', Racism and Representation", in: *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. Harlow, New York: Pearson 2012, 167-180.

Nov. 28  
+  
Nov. 30  
TA

### Representing the Other

► Homi K. Bhabha: "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism", in: *The Location of Culture*. London, New York: Routledge 1994, 94-120.

► *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1983):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy4BBouNpmU>



► Trinh T. Minh-Ha: "No Master Territories", in: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (eds): *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1995, 215-218.

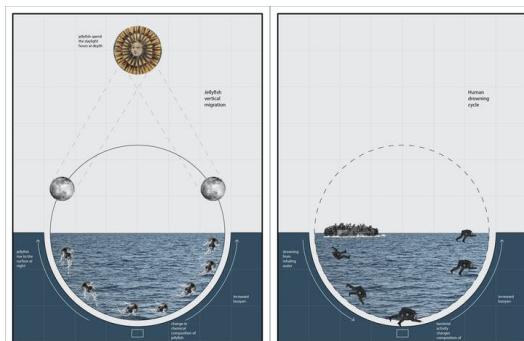
▷ Stephen Fay: *An Analysis of Homi K. Bhabha's The Location of Culture*. London, New York: Routledge 2017, 9-12 / 35-44.

## VI. Cultures Beyond Humanism

Dec. 05  
+  
Dec. 07  
TA

### Tentacles

► Ala Tannir: *Blood in the Water: Tracing an Interspecies Alliance between At-risk Humans and Jellyfish in the Mediterranean*. (Master Thesis, Rhode Island School of Design) Providence, Rhode Island 2017.



► Donna J. Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, London: Duke University Press 2016, 30-33 / 51-67.

	<p>▷ Stacy Alaimo: "Jellyfish Science, Jellyfish Aesthetics: Posthuman Reconfigurations of the Sensible", in: Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, Astrida Neimanis (eds): <i>Thinking with Water</i>. Montreal, Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press 2013, 139-164.</p> <p>▷ Rosi Braidotti: "Post-Anthropocentrism: Life Beyond the Species", in: <i>The Posthuman</i>. Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity 2013, 55-104 (especially 81-89).</p>
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ASSIGNMENTS :

	<p>REGULAR ATTENDANCE and ACTIVE PARTICIPATION in discussions / close readings / in-class activities ...</p> <p><b>10% of the final grade</b></p> <p>▷ Students shall ► TAKE PART IN THE DISCUSSIONS, comment on their peers' presentations, react to the instructor's input and questions, reflect on readings and audiovisual material ... ► Participation is assessed with respect to the RELATIVE QUANTITY AND QUALITY of the comments (targeted engagement with arguments and readings, conclusiveness, ability for wider contextualization).</p>
	<p>In-class IMPULSE / PRESENTATION</p> <p><b>25% of the final grade</b></p> <p>▷ Each participant will act as "expert" on ONE OF THE CLASS TOPICS: they ► prepare the respective week's material (mandatory + optional; depending on group size) and present its MOST IMPORTANT / INTERESTING / PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS in a brief impulse (~10-12 min). They ► engage with the topic in a CRITICAL WAY (<i>no mere summaries</i>) and give ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL OR THEORETICAL INPUT.</p> <p>▷ The impulse should introduce a number of ► QUESTIONS OR ISSUES that will guide our discussion (ideally, after their presentation, the "experts" act as co-instructors for the session).</p> <p>▷ Every participant ► selects a TOPIC/DATE from the syllabus for their impulse and enters their name in the respective POLL <b>UNTIL FRIDAY, SEPT. 22, 2023:</b></p> <p><a href="https://nuudel.digitalcourage.de/ZdCEkrkTT2KwyI1r">https://nuudel.digitalcourage.de/ZdCEkrkTT2KwyI1r</a></p> <p>▷ Depending on the number of course participants, every topic can be ► presented by 1 TO MAX. 4 STUDENTS. (Group work does not only mean dividing the readings but collectively structuring and preparing the impulse and handout [see below]).</p> <p>▷ <i>However, please do not select a topic/date already assigned to another student as long as there are unallocated slots in the poll!</i></p>
	<p>1 concise IMPULSE HANDOUT</p> <p><b>10% of the final grade</b></p> <p>▷ For their short presentations, the participants create a written 1-page handout paper that shows ► the ORDER of the presented points, their MAIN ARGUMENTS, CONCLUSION, and further QUESTIONS.</p> <p>▷ The handout ► should be structured in SHORT SENTENCES, KEYWORDS, BULLET POINTS – no continuous text and long paragraphs: the structure and central ideas of the presentation should be visible <i>at first glance</i>. It serves as ► previous INFO SHEET and, afterwards, as learning and memory aid for the other course participants.</p> <p>▷ The ► handout will be ASSESSED with respect to its STRUCTURE, ACCURACY, AND CLARITY (<i>visual material and critical statements can be included</i>).</p>

- ▷ The handout ► should be submitted **NO LATER THAN 24 HOURS BEFORE** the respective class: Please send it as .doc or .pdf document to the instructor who will upload it on MOODLE.

#### MIDTERM 'MYTH' (500-600 words)

##### 20% of the final grade

- ▷ Participants write a brief ► ANALYSIS OF A CULTURAL PHENOMENON OR ARTIFACT (either a 'Viennese' myth or one from their culture of origin). The midterm paper should be guided by R. Barthes' mythological method (*detailed information in the third week of the course*). The ► SUBJECT is chosen by the student. It can also ► INCLUDE IMAGES / AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL.
- ▷ The paper ► will be **SUBMITTED DURING MIDTERM WEEK (Oct. 23 – Oct. 27)**. Please send a .doc or .pdf document to the instructor and Teaching Assistant who will add comments and give written feedback.

#### Final PAPER or AUDIOVISUAL WORK

##### 35% of the final grade

- ▷ Participants can produce either a written FINAL PAPER<sup>1</sup> or AUDIO/VISUAL WORK.
- ▷ The ► SUBJECT OF THE FINAL PAPER OR AUDIOVISUAL WORK is chosen by the student. A discussion of the subject with the instructor is not obligatory but recommended. ► It can ADOPT A SUBJECT FROM THE COURSE SESSIONS; in this case, it should clearly EXPAND THE APPROACH AND SCOPE of the respective in-class discussion and presentation, e.g., by introducing new readings and additional material, focusing on specific aspects, widening the perspective. ► It is, however, suggested to CHOOSE A SUBJECT THAT HAS NOT BEEN PART OF THE SYLLABUS (but is connected to the overall theme of "Culture" and "Cultural Studies").
- ▷ The topic should be treated in an 'academic' manner, i.e., refer to *at least* three titles of scholarly literature. ► In any case, students are required to DEVELOP AN EXPLICIT RESEARCH QUESTION that states their interest and goals.
- ▷ Searching for ► relevant BOOKS, ARTICLES, etc. is PART OF THE ASSIGNMENT. Students may consult the instructor, but are basically responsible for compiling their work material themselves.
- ▷ Upon consultation, ► the final work CAN ALSO BE PRODUCED IN GROUPS OF TWO – in this case, you can opt for a SHARED OR INDIVIDUAL GRADE. For individual grading, you must clearly indicate who produced which part of the work.
- ▷ The final paper ► should have a LENGTH OF ~1.500–2.000 WORDS (*excl. cover sheet, list of contents, bibliography, etc.*). IMAGES should be inserted in the text (no separate part for illustrations). The STYLE FOR REFERENCING and quoting can be freely chosen but should be consistent throughout the paper. Papers should be submitted in .doc or .pdf format.
- ▷ Papers are ► submitted via E-MAIL; ► **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION will be DECEMBER 24, 2023**

<sup>1</sup> Please take note of CEU's PLAGIARISM POLICY: <https://documents.ceu.edu/documents/p-1405-1> In addition, CEU makes use of detection software to identify the possible use of generative AI (*ChatGPT, Bard, Bing, etc.*) for the composition of written course work. If the use of such tools is not explicitly indicated in the paper, it will be treated as plagiarism.



- ▷ Main CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION of the papers are:
  - ▶ Choice of topic (connection to course subject / adequate breadth / range of source material)
  - ▶ Originality of approach (regarding the subject, form of expression, combination of material and method that offer novel perspectives)
  - ▶ Structural clarity (convincing order of points & use of examples / transparency of argumentation / no redundancies and repetitions)
  - ▶ Conclusiveness (no broad generalizations / verification through scholarly sources)
  - ▶ Development of own thoughts/interpretations (ideally, your work not only assembles thoughts from your sources but adds original aspects ...)
  - ▶ Clarity of style / verbal expression (this does *not* mean 'empirical', 'dry', 'academic')
  - ▶ Formal correctness (compliance with the guidelines concerning word count / consistency of footnotes and bibliography)
  
- ▷ Instead of a written paper, ▶ students may also prepare an AUDIO/VISUAL WORK (PHOTO ESSAY, VIDEO, PAINTING, SCRAPBOOK, INSTALLATION, PODCAST, WEBSITE, etc.): the work can be ▶ composed from SELF-PRODUCED MATERIAL AND/OR FOUND FOOTAGE. ▶ Formal and technical issues, extent or intended length should be coordinated with the instructor.
  
- ▷ Final audio/visual works will ▶ *not* be graded according to technical criteria but based on the ORIGINALITY OF THE APPROACH AND THE POTENTIAL TO CONVEY THE MAIN ARGUMENT.
  
- ▷ Audio/visual ▶ works MAY BE COMPLEMENTED BY A WRITTEN COMMENT to elucidate their conceptual or theoretical approach.

Deadlines are the SAME FOR WRITTEN AND AUDIO/VISUAL works.